

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Once a woman had a dream in which she walked into a new kind of store she had never been in before. To her surprise, God himself was at the counter. She asked God, “What do you sell here?” “Everything your heart desires,” God replied. “I want peace of mind, happiness, love and wisdom,” said the woman. God smiled and said, “I think you got me wrong, my dear. We don’t sell fruits here. But only seeds.” In the Gospel of last Sunday, we heard that God sows the seeds, and it is our task to prepare the soil, nurture the seeds, and make it grow and bear fruits. In the Gospel of today, we hear of the parable of the wheat and the weeds. God always sows good seeds. The growth of weeds among the wheat is a reminder to each of us of the reality and existence of evil.

The world is like a field in which the wheat and weeds grow side by side. The Church is the same, and so is each of us. Each of us has a lot of good in us and some evil as well. We are the field of God. God allows the good, and the evil to coexist in the world so that the evil ones may come to conversion before their time ends. There is need for patience. God is patient. He respects our freedom. He considers freedom to be such a precious gift that he tolerates evil at least until the Day of Judgment. He does not force anyone to choose the good. He gives us time to repent and change our lives. But He does warn us. Some of us are so zealous that we do not want to tolerate evil. We are distressed when we hear of scandals, especially scandals in the Church. Remember that there was one traitor even among the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus. Jesus could have gotten rid of him, but he did not. Instead, he longed for his conversion and appealed to him by love and kindness.

The young St. Paul took upon himself the task of rooting out Christianity because he considered it an evil. But he had his enlightenment on the way to Damascus. So what he fought against became what he fought for. Similarly, in our zeal to serve God, we go on a crusade against evil in the Church, in our society and in the world. There is so much evil in the world—abortion, sexual immorality, porn, living in active same-sex relationships, abuse—sexual and physical—drugs, gangs, serial killings, terrorism, and the list can go on. Sometimes I feel that I am one such over-zealous person who wants to get rid of all evils in the world. After reading about and watching the video of what Boko Haram did in Nigeria to those 200+ girls a few years ago, I was livid. I asked God why He would tolerate such horrific evils.

Why not wipe those people out? I was in the office very upset about it, and something within told me to read the Bible that was on my desk. When I opened that Bible, guess what I got: today's gospel passage! That helped me to understand that I am not in control, but God is, and that He is patient. If God were to root out all evils, you and I would not be here today. Though there is evil in us, God does not treat us as evil. He treats us as wheat. That is why He sent His only Son to teach us God's ways and transform us into the likeness of God.

God's tolerance for evil does not mean that we can encourage or support evil. We have to promote good. There is much evil in society. There is more defense for owls, whales and other animals than human life in the womb. Mark Twain said, "We revere all forms of life except human life." Most media support abortion, and we consider the opinion of the journalist as infallible. It is the case with most burning social issues. Ninety percent of journalists supported Hitler, and so people took their cue and also supported Hitler. The consequence was the murder of millions of people. Let us not live our life by the columns in the newspaper or by the "black box" in our living rooms but by the Word of God. Jesus, through his life and teachings, has given us the path to truth and goodness. He has sown in us seeds of goodness. Let us nurture it, make it grow and bear fruit. Then the evil in us will gradually disappear.